



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 18, 2018

Contact: Chuck Perrodin, Media Relations Manager
(o) 225-342-7615

CPRA takes monthly Board Meeting on the road to Jean Lafitte, Louisiana

Jean Lafitte Area Protection Projects

Progress continues on enhancing levels of tidal protection for the area encompassing the communities of Jean Lafitte and Rosethorne, CPRA Project Manager Dustin White reported.

Measured against accepted standard sea level for the area, natural ground elevations range between minus one foot and plus four feet. A study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recommended levees and levee walls to provide structural protection in the area to an elevation of plus seven feet, providing a 10-year level of protection against rainfall and tidal event flooding.

“Since 2008, the state has identified \$42 million for projects to accomplish this goal, most recently \$20 million from our State Surplus Fund account,” said White. “We are expecting another \$11 million in GOMESA federal offshore royalty funds in the coming two years.”

The 2.9-mile Jean Lafitte Tidal Protection project is now in the construction phase, while the 5.3-mile Rosethorne Tidal Protection project is currently in engineering and design.

Mid-Basin Sediment Diversion Program

CPRA Mid-Basin Sediment Diversion Program Manager Brad Barth gave an update on progress in studying the proposed Mid-Barataria sediment diversion just upriver from Ironton on the west bank of Plaquemines Parish.

“Modeling shows the selected area has the right mixture of having a shallow basin with features to slow down the outlet water and efficiently trap the sands, silts and clays,” he reported.

Barth also gave information contradicting some older studies being used to challenge the effectiveness of sediment diversions as a land and marsh building technique.

“For those who show pictures of the storm surge damage in the outfall area of the Caernarvon freshwater diversion, I can show photos of similar damage in that area—25 years before the Caernarvon was built,” Barth said. He also challenged some of the scientific techniques and conclusions reached in those other studies.

“The bottom line is that as engineers and scientists we must be very careful when considering research and evaluations to make sure we clearly understand the assumptions and data used or not used to draw conclusions,” Barth said.

The continuing Environmental Impact Study is scientifically addressing numerous impacts including but not limited to issues such as navigation, flooding, water quality, social economic impacts, cultural resources, and commercial and recreational fisheries, including the basin’s natural resources such as shrimp, oyster, crab, and fin fish fisheries.

A Draft Environmental Impact Study is expected to be released in the final quarter of 2019. It will be presented to the public for full review and comment.

Barataria Basin Restoration Priorities

The immense 1.5 million acre Barataria Basin encompasses parts of seven parishes with 500,000 acres of fresh, intermediate, brackish and saltwater marsh, and 150,000 acres of swampland.

CPRA’s Maury Chatellier, Chief of the Project Management Division, says an area that big and diverse presents quite a challenge, but CPRA is addressing its issues in big ways.

“Just in that basin we have 80 projects completed or underway,” he said. “We’ve created, enhanced or protected 60,000 acres using shoreline protection, hydrologic restoration, vegetative plantings, structural flood protection, freshwater diversions, siphons, barrier islands and marsh creation.”

Chatellier pointed to several outstanding successes, including the Davis Pond freshwater diversion that is helping to control salinity in the basin; Bayou Dupont, the first inland marsh creation project using sediment dredged from the Mississippi River; Scofield Island, the first offshore barrier island ever restored using sediment pipelined from the Mississippi; beneficial use of river sediment to start restoring Spanish Pass near Venice in Plaquemines Parish; the restoration of West Grand Terre island; and the proposed restoration of the dwindling habitat for brown pelicans and other nesting birds at Queen Bess Island.

“In all, our investment in the Barataria Basin is more than \$3.8 billion,” Chatellier reported. “And in this one basin we have transported more than 82 million cubic yards of sediment, enough to fill the Superdome more than 12 times.”

CPRA Implementation Update

Project activity continues at a brisk pace, reported CPRA Executive Director Michael Ellis, as he pointed to 19 projects in construction, 43 in engineering and design, and five more in the planning stage.

“Our projects in construction will benefit more than 132,044 acres of coastal habitat and improve more than 173 miles of levees,” said Ellis. “In our fiscal year that just wrapped up at the end of June, we completed 11 construction projects at a cost of \$834 million, and the five most-recently completed projects represent \$668 million of that \$834 million total.”

Ellis said two projects are heading into construction—Coles Bayou Marsh Creation, a \$24.9 million project to restore 398 acres in Vermilion Parish; and South Grand Chenier Marsh Creation, a \$23.8 million project to create 414 acres in Cameron Parish. Another project will go out for bids in the next six months to create 769 acres of marsh in Jefferson Parish at Northwest Turtle Bay.

“And soon we hope to have more details to report to this board on the recently-approved \$1.4 billion in new federal funding,” said Ellis. “That means more than \$760 million for the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain hurricane levee, \$343 million for the Comite River Diversion Canal, \$255 million for East Baton Rouge Flood Control, \$15 million for Grand Isle protection and berm reconstruction, and \$15 million to develop coastal restoration and flood protection solutions for the Amite River, Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity, Westbank and Vicinity, South Central Louisiana, and Upper Barataria. These are very exciting times.”

###

Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is the single state entity with authority to develop, articulate, implement, and enforce a comprehensive coastal Master Plan of unified vision, to reduce tropical storm surge flood impact, to restore our bountiful natural resources, to build land to protect our nation's critical energy infrastructure, and to secure Louisiana's coast now and for future generations.